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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001364

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: NOTIONAL CALENDAR FOR ERDOGAN'S ASSUMPTION
OF THE PRIME MINISTRY

(U) Classified by Acting Political Counselor Nicholas S.
Kass. Reason 1.5(b)(d)

1. (U) AK leader Erdogan is a candidate for Parliament in the special March 9 election in Siirt province. Assuming he wins a seat in the legislature, the election will serve as a prelude to his eventually assuming the role of prime minister.

2. (U) The following notional calendar represents our understanding of the procedural steps, reflecting Turkish law and custom, that are involved. The timeline below is also notional, reflecting the earliest possible date on which Erdogan could take office as P.M., that is, mid-March. Notably, Erdogan over the March 1-2 weekend signaled publicly that he would not/not seek to take over in the immediate future.

-- March 9: Election in Siirt. Erdogan wins a seat;

-- March 10-12: Erdogan receives document of registration (mazbata) declaring his status as an elected M.P.;

-- March 11-13: Erdogan sworn in at Parliament, formally assumes his duties as M.P.;

-- March 13-14: Resignation of P.M. Gul accepted by President Sezer, who then designates Erdogan to form a (59th) government;

-- March 14-15: If President Sezer immediately gives the mandate to Erdogan to form a government, the cabinet list will likely be presented to the Presidency within two days.

Sezer's Calendar

3. (U) There is no constitutionally defined timetable under which the president would make decisions regarding the inauguration of a next (Erdogan-led) government, but the process will likely run as follows:

-- President approves the new cabinet list and sends it to Parliament. From that moment on, Erdogan would be regarded officially as prime minister;

-- The cabinet list is formally read to Parliament;

-- Within one week, the P.M. reads the new government's program;

-- Vote of confidence debates in Parliament will begin two (full) days after the reading of the program;

-- Vote of confidence held one (full) day after the debate closes.

Comment: Possible Surprises

4. (C) Sezer is a staunch Kemalist with a heightened, Javert-like sense of legalistic propriety. He could introduce unexpected elements into the government formation process -- partly, we expect, to signal to Erdogan that the President and other organs of the State will be watching the government very closely. Moreover, while by tradition the

president gives the mandate to form a government to the leader of the party with the most seats in Parliament, he is not legally obliged to do so. The president's traditional obligation here is simply to give the mandate to someone who could win a vote of confidence in the legislature.

PEARSON